PS1 for 6/8/89 # Trying to Pull the Woold Over Grandmother's Eyes

When Ronald Reagan commented last year that we certainly don't want any federal daycare bills that would require the registration of grandmothers, he hit a tender nerve with the liberal Congressmen who are trying to paint themselves as pro-family. After all, howe can you be pro-family while requiring grandmothers to be registered or licensed in order to take care of their own grandchildren?

At first, the liberal legislators promoting the Dodd-Kildee ABC baby-sitting bill were so imbued with the Big Brother notion that child care should be professionalized that they didn't understand how this grandmother issue played in Peoria. Congressman Dale Kildee (D-MT) admitted in one of his early hearings on the bill that, if his mother were to care for his children (her grandchildren) in his own home, he would want her registered and trained by the government.

When the Dodd-Kildee ABC bill, which failed last year, was reintroduced into the current Congress this year (S. 5), it was doctored up with a little cosmetic surgery. The "new" ABC bill appears to make grandmothers (but not other relatives) eligible to receive federal benefits, but it's all done with mirrors.

What would a grandmother have to do in order to receive any federal benefits under the ABC bill for taking care of her own grandchildren? First, she would have to live in a state that actually gives out child care "certificates"; our experience with the daycare funds now distributed under Social Service Block Grants shows that few if any states would actually issue such certificates, and even then only a small percentage of money would be used this way.

Second, the grandmother would have to get state government approval for the conditions under which she would care for her grandchild and then enter into a personal written contract specifying those conditions. Just as a rose by any other name smells are sweet, licensing or registration of grandmothers by any other name smells just as un-American.

Third, the child's parents would have to sign a contract with the state. Fourth, the grandmother would be required to demonstrate that she complies with federal health, safety, and nutrition standards.

Not only would grandmother have to comply with detailed federal nutrition standards as already established under the National School Lunch Act, but she would have to submit daily reports proving that the food she feeds her grandchildren meets these standards. For example, she would have to vouch that the sandwich she serves her grandchildren has at least three tablespoons of peanut butter or 1-1/2 ounces of cheese.

The grandmothers of this country are simply not going to measure the peanut butter, weigh the cheese, and keep written records of what they feed their grandchildren. So, the inclusion of grandmother as a person eligible for benefits in the liberal ABC baby-sitting bill is just a ruse to deceive the public.

The so-called changes in this year's Dodd-Kildee ABC baby-sitting bill are equally phony when it comes to the issue of religious daycare, which was one of the reasons that the bill failed to pass last year. Although last year's strident and vindictive anti-religious language has been removed, nothing has changed in regard to the bill's blatant discrimination against religious daycare.

The ABC bill's sponsors claim that, in the new version, church-based daycare could receive benefits. However, that would be true ONLY if the church-based daycare banishes religion from its program. Prayers, religious values, Bible stories, hymns, or similar activities would be banned as a prerequisite to ABC daycare benefits.

The result would be just the same as if last year's anti-religious language were still intact. The ABC bill would only permit benefits to church-housed daycare so long as it purged itself of religion.

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Thus, the ABC bill forbids the states to exempt religious daycare center from regulations, which many states currently do. When those churches find out what the liberals have done to them, there will be a public reaction on the scale of what happened when senior citizens found out how they deceived about catastrophic health insurance.

Once the Federal Government states handing out money for child care, there is no way to solve the grandmother problem or the religious daycare problem, which together make up most current other-than-mother child care. The bureaucrats will demand "accountability," which means licensing, registration and regulations, and the secularists will successfully forbid aid to religious daycare.

The only fair and sensible solution is to adopt the non-discriminatory tax credit approach, which puts cash in parents' hands just like an income tax refund and allows parents 100 percent freedom to choose whether to spend their own hard-earned money on mother care, grandmother care, religious care, or atheist care.